

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 089
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 2543

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BL
SUBJ: BANZER'S ALTERNATIVES IF HE DECIDES TO POSTPONE BOLIVIAN
ELECTIONS

REF: LA PAZ 2535

1. ASSUMING THAT BANZER DOES INTEND TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS,
AS IT APPEARS AT THIS POINT, WE SEE SEVERAL POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE
COURSES HE MIGHT TAKE. HE COULD POSTPONE ELECTIONS FOR A SHORT
PERIOD--PERHAPS SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR AND TO GUARANTEE TO CARRY
OUT THE PROCESS TO THE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PARTIES. OR,
HE COULD POSTPONE ELECTIONS INDEFINITELY, ARGUING THAT THE
COUNTRY IS NOT READY FOR DEMOCRACY AND THE PEOPLE DON'T
WANT IT.

2. IN THE FIRST CASE, TO MAINTAIN ANY CREDIBILITY, HE WOULD
HAVE TO CONTINUE THE PRESENT OPEN POLITICAL AND LABOR UNION
CLIMATE AND AVOID A RETURN TO THE RESTRICTIONS WHICH EXISTED
PRIOR TO THE GENERAL AMNESTY.

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3. IN THE SECOND CASE, WE COULD FORESEE A MORE RESTRICTIVE
CLIMATE, PERHAPS WITH POLITICAL EXILINGS OF DISSIDENT ELEMENTS,
ESPECIALLY IF THEY TRIED TO STRONGLY PROTEST THE ELECTION
POSTPONEMENT.

4. IN EITHER CASE BANZER COULD ENDEAVOR TO REMAIN AS PRESIDENT,
WITH THE BACKING OF THE MILITARY, AND PRESIDE OVER BOLIVIA'S

POLITICAL FUTURE. OR HE COULD RESHUFFLE GOVERNMENT IN SOME FASHION, PERHAPS WITHDRAWING INTO THE WINGS AND ALLOWING A MILITARY JUNTA OR EVEN A JOINT MILITARY CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT TO RULE THE COUNTRY. IT IS CERTAINLY NOT OUT OF THE QUESTION THAT BANZER COULD STILL DECIDE TO TRY TO GAIN MILITARY SUPPORT FOR HIS BECOMING A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN ELECTIONS SCHEDULED AT SOME FUTURE DATE. HIS STOCK WITH THE MILITARY, HOWEVER, IS DIMINISHING. HE WOULD HAVE TO RESIGN AT LEAST SIX MONTHS AHEAD OF ELECTIONS UNDER BOLIVIA'S CONSTITUTION TO RUN.

5. WHATEVER HIS PLAN, BANZER WILL HAVE TO EXPLAIN TO THE NATION THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS. WE ASSUME THAT HIS RATIONALE WILL BE SOME COMBINATION OF THE FOLLOWING:

A. BOLIVIA FACES SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROBLEMS WHICH WILL REQUIRE STRONG STABILIZATION MEASURES. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RESPOND TO THE UPCOMING ECONOMIC CRISIS AND AT THE SAME TIME RETURN THE NATION TO DEMOCRACY. A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WILL BE TOO WEAK AT THE OUTSET TO SURVIVE UNDER A FAILING ECONOMY.

B. THE COUNTRY AND THE DISORGANIZED CIVILIAN POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY ARE NOT PREPARED FOR THE SORT OF FREE, HONEST ELECTIONS PLANNED FOR JULY. THERE IS NO REALLY VIABLE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE, BOLIVIA'S FRACTURED POLITICAL PARTIES
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HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO FORM COHESIVE POLITICAL FORCES OR AGREE ON CANDIDATES, AND THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN OVER PREMATURE ELECTIONS. MORE TIME WILL BE NEEDED TO PREPARE FOR ELECTIONS.

C. CHILEAN INTRANSIGENCE IN RESPONSE TO BOLIVIA'S SEA-OUTLET DIPLOMACY HAS FORCED A RUPTURE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. WITH THE ANNIVERSARY PERIOD OF THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC APPROACHING, BOLIVIA MUST BE UNITED AND STRONG AND ONLY CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT MILITARY GOVERNMENT CAN ASSURE THIS.

6. BANZER MIGHT WELL ATTRIBUTE A LARGE SHARE OF BOLIVIA'S ECONOMIC WOES TO THE UNITED STATE'S DECISION TO SELL TIN FROM THE GSA STOCKPILE. IN THE WORST CASE, HE COULD TRY TO DUMP THE BULK OF THE BLAME, THEREFORE, FOR POSTPONED ELECTIONS ON THE USG.

7. OBVIOUSLY BANZER HAS VARIOUS OPTIONS AND HE MAY NOT HAVE DECIDED HIMSELF EXACTLY HOW HE WILL MOVE. WE KNOW THAT HE INTENDS TO CONSULT WITH THE SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS ON APRIL 3 AND WHATEVER DECISION RESULTS WE SUSPECT BANZER WILL

TRY TO PUT AS MUCH OF THE RESPONSIBILITY AS POSSIBLE ON THE
ARMED FORCES.
BOEKER

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